



## **PRESS RELEASE STATE LABOR DEPARTMENT**

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### **LABOR DEPARTMENT BEGINS NEW STATE SAFETY INSPECTION PROGRAMS FOR BOILERS, ELEVATORS**

Following legislative mandates to begin state safety inspection programs for boilers and elevators, the State Labor Department has set both programs in motion.

State Labor Commissioner Jim Bennett said safety checks for Alabama's 44,000 boilers and pressure vessels began in February. Similar inspections for safe operation for the state's 12,000 elevators and escalators will begin this summer.

"The public has a right to know the elevator on which they are riding has been certified as being safe by someone who is knowledgeable about its operation," Bennett said. "More people ride elevators and escalators than all other forms of transportation combined."

Bennett said the industry records about 17,000 elevator and escalator accidents each year averaging 26 fatalities.

At the same time the nation experiences hundreds of boiler accidents each year. In 2001, a dozen people were killed in boiler explosions and 84 others injured including five deaths and 48 injuries at a county fair in Ohio.

Bennett said schools will get special attention by his office. An elementary school explosion in Oklahoma in 1982 killed six children and one adult and injured 42. A day care center explosion in Atlanta in 1980 killed four children and one adult. Seven others were seriously injured.

"Safety inspections programs have headed off countless incidents involving unsafe boilers and elevators across the country, Bennett said. "We are hoping we get there before anything happens here."

Alabama becomes the 49<sup>th</sup> state to adopt a state boiler safety code and the 44<sup>th</sup> to adopt an elevator inspection program. Bennett said Gov. Riley has been fully supportive of both programs.

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